

LETTERS FROM MEMBERS

Dear ISOH:

In 1979, the author Brian Garfield published a very controversial novel entitled *The Palladin*. He did write it in collaboration with a man called "Christopher Creighton," who acts in the book as the hero of the story. The novel is based on the extraordinary life story of this Christopher Creighton during World War II, in which he, as a personal "Palladin," or knight-errant for Winston Churchill himself, executed some very dangerous missions all over the world. As Churchill's Palladin, Creighton, then a 15-year-old boy, went to Belgium, just before the Germans invaded the low countries, to get strategic information for England; and that was only the beginning of the many missions to follow.

The most controversial story in this book concerns my own country (The Netherlands) as Creighton claims to have destroyed a Dutch submarine by sabotage of its torpedoes as the sub had sighted (according to this story) the Japanese fleet a few days before Pearl Harbor. Creighton placed his demolition charges on express orders from Mr. Churchill's "right-hand man" Mr. Owl, as they were both waiting anxiously for the United States to enter the war against Germany and they did not want the sighting report from the Dutch submarine to become known to the Americans.

This book, and especially the story about the submarine, made headlines in my country and the Royal Netherlands Navy acted furiously, as in their opinion the story was a giant hoax. They countered that no Dutch submarine could have been in the patrol area mentioned in the book or in the vicinity of the track of the Japanese attack fleet. Mr. Christopher Creighton himself appeared on Dutch television to plead his cause, but he was hidden behind a screen to prevent recognition and identification. The story about the Dutch submarine will probably remain unsolved until Winston Churchill's personal papers will be freed for research (if they in fact still exist) but in the mean time another story has appeared about planes from Wake Island sighting a submarine with Dutch markings, just before the "Day of Infamy" at Pearl Harbor.

What has all this to do with the Olympic Games??? Nothing at all - and a lot!

The funny thing is that author Garfield himself provides the clues to the real identity of Christopher Creighton in his book. And that is where the Olympic Games come into the story. Garfield indicates (p. 59) that Creighton's father was an Olympic gold medalist in a track event for Great Britain at the 1920 Olympic Games. Further he mentions that on other pages, that his father: 1) was a Royal Flying Corps pilot during World War I, 2) became a very successful and even brilliant surgeon on Harley Street in London, and 3) joined the Royal Air Force (RAF) at the beginning of World War II.

Ian Buchanan's book *British Olympians: A Hundred Years of Gold Medallists* finally provided a clue to the mysterious "Christopher Creighton." On page 82, the biography of British Olympic gold medalist, John Creighton Ainsworth-Davis is included. Buchanan's description of Ainsworth-Davis fits like a surgical glove on the facts mentioned in Brian Garfield's book! [*Editor*: see Buchanan's biography of Ainsworth-Davis below]

But still I feel that sometimes the Olympic Games can give really interesting facts for a researcher, but only if you look far enough!

Tony Bijkerk
THE NETHERLANDS

Dear Tony,

Now that's a story! I am continually amazed by the number of "famous" people related to Olympians. I have compiled a fairly large number of these connected to American Olympians but would be interested in hearing from other members with connections in other countries such as Tony's. In our book, *Quest for Gold: The Encyclopaedia of American Olympians* (1984), Ian Buchanan and I had one page entitled "Famous Families" in which we included this information, but I can tell you from my notes on that page it would now fill up about 4-5 pages.

Dear ISOH:

I was reading recently in *Olympisches Feuer*, the official magazine of the German Olympic Committee of the founding of an IOC Memorabilia Commission. This 20th IOC Commission is for collectors of stamps, coins, and other pieces of memory. President Samaranch is the President of the commission. No mention is made of this in the *Olympic Review* or the *Olympic Message*. Do any of the members know anything of this? There is or was a FIPO (Philatelic Commission), so I wonder if this is now reformed to a general memorabilia commission. I would appreciate it if any members who have knowledge of this would contact ISOH or me and something could perhaps be published in *Citius, Altius, Fortius*.

Pim Hurman
THE NETHERLANDS

Dear ISOH:

With reference to your article which was published in the *ISOH Journal*, I wish to bring to your attention the following:

In the Ancient Olympic Games, all Greeks were allowed to participate, provided that they were born by free parents and they were coming from what was considered and known as Greek territory, i.e., Southern Greece (Attica, Peloponese, the Aegean Islands, etc.), Northern Greece (Thessaly, Epirus, Macedonia, Thrace, etc.), as well as all centers of Greek civilization outside Greece (Greek colonies in Asia Minor, Italy, Sicily, etc.)

Consequently, if the Macedonians were not considered as Greeks, they would not have been allowed to participate in the Ancient Olympic Games.

In that sense, any attempt such as the one in the above mentioned article, which distinguishes and isolates Antigonos and Philip II, father of Alexander the Great, from the rest of the Olympic Champions in antiquity, is rather odd, if not suspicious and constitutes a very provocative historical inaccuracy. Even more so, as an attempt is also made to link and confuse these ancient Olympic champions with modern Olympic medalists and especially those coming from the Former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia (provisional name by the United Nations).

I, therefore, consider this attempt by the author of the article as unfortunate event which even if it is a result of confusion, it is still unjustifiable and inexcusable, since above all, it is inconsistent with the principles of Olympic Philosophy, which dictate in no uncertain terms that involvement in any national or international disputes should be absolutely avoided.

I would also like to bring to your attention that the European National Olympic Committees Federation as well as the International Olympic Committee has agreed that,

1. Should athletes from the Former Yugoslav Republic participate in the Olympic Games, they should parade under the letter "F" (FYROM), and not under the letter "M" (Macedonia).
2. These athletes will parade with the flag of the A.C.N.O.
3. The National Olympic Committee of Skopje will be accepted in the IOC only under the name and flag with which the Former Yugoslav Republic will be accepted in the United Nations.

Bearing all the above in mind, I consider it only appropriate to request that this unjustifiable inaccuracy, which has appeared in the *ISOH Journal* and can only create tension in the harmonious relations of the Olympic Family, be revised in writing as soon as possible.

I would appreciate it if you could look into the matter immediately and inform me accordingly as soon as possible.

Kostas Georgiadis
Dean
International Olympic Academy

Dear Kostas:

I assure you that no insult was meant to the Greek people. There is currently a major political struggle ensuing over the name "Macedonia" and the exact political alliance of the region, with claims being made from the former Yugoslavia, Greece, Albania, and Bulgaria.

It is true that Macedonia was, in ancient times, a city-state of Greece. My source for the listings of Ancient Macedonian Olympic champions was a book sponsored by the International Olympic Academy, then under the sponsorship of Nicolaos Yalouris and Otto Szymiczek. The book, a large coffee-table type entitled *The Olympic Games*, was published in 1976 by Ekdotike Athenon S.A. At the end of the book, all known Ancient Olympic Champions are listed, based on material from the book *I vincitori negli antichi Agoni Olimpici* by Luigi Moretti (Rome, 1957).

When referring to "Macedonian" Olympians I was referring to Olympic athletes from that geographic region, including both the ancient city-state and the former Yugoslav republic, not any political entity. The two wrestlers mentioned, Šaban Trstena and Šaban Sejdī, were both from Skopje, which was the capital city of the former Yugoslav Republic. I apologize for any confusion.

I assume that FYROM refers to Former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia. I am sorry if you think I have violated any Olympic Philosophy by listing a name incorrectly. [Note: a similar letter was received from the Hellenic (Greek) Olympic Committee.]